United Nations A/C.2/54/SR.26

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Official Records

Distr.: General
21 December 1999
English
Original: French

**Second Committee**

**Summary record of the 26th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 29 October 1999, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman*: Mr. Niculescu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Romania)

## Contents

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (*continued*)

(c) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*)

Agenda item 99: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

(c) Women in development (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

99-82004 (E)

*In the absence of Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Niculescu (Romania), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 11.30 a.m.*

**Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development** (*continued*)

**(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21** (*continued*)

*Draft resolution on implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly (A/C.2/54/L.14)*

1. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.14, drawing particular attention to paragraphs 2, 4, 6 and 7. She underlined the importance which those delegations attached to effective implementation of Agenda 21.

**(c) Convention on Biological Diversity**

*Draft resolution on the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/C.2/54/L.15)*

2. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.15, drawing particular attention to paragraphs 4, 8 and 10.

**Agenda Item 99: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation** (*continued*)

**(c) Women in development**

3. **Ms. King** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) introduced the *1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* (A/54/227), which dealt in particular with globalization and its consequences for women and work. It was the fourth such quinquennial publication of the Division for the Advancement of Women, and benefited from input from agencies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the World Bank.

4. The major trend in the world economy was the intensification of the process of market integration, which was characterized by greater international trade and financial flows. The *1999 Survey* dealt with the way in which globalization had transformed the world of work for women. In particular it discussed the effects of globalization on women within the household and on their working conditions. A number of subjects were studied in detail, among them the reorganization of production, the fact that flexibility of employment was becoming more common, international labour mobility and the transformation of the work of women in rural areas.

5. The *Survey* demonstrated that the impact of globalization on the work of women was mixed. Forces unleashed by the phenomenon of globalization had opened up new horizons which could potentially be empowering to women but on the other hand could create economic conditions which were inimical to gender equality, leading to increased economic volatility and job insecurity and a greater probability of losing one's livelihood. There had been a steady increase in female employment, resulting in increased economic autonomy of women and a stronger role for them within households, although they often had precarious jobs which did not enable them to enjoy basic worker rights. The *Survey* also made clear that globalization tended in some circumstances to exacerbate discriminatory practices against women in the workplace and to increase inequalities between the sexes. In that respect, she called on the members of the Committee systematically to take gender factors into account in their deliberations. To achieve the goals of peace and sustainable human development it was essential to adopt an approach which incorporated the gender perspective. That meant that consideration should be given to the means whereby women and men were able to participate in the global economy on an equal basis and derive the same benefits from economic growth.

6. In that context the *Survey* suggested a number of measures that should be taken at national and international levels within the framework of gender policies. They included: the adoption of equal opportunity programmes aimed at reducing segregation in employment on the basis of sex; the adoption of policies allowing women workers to consolidate the benefits derived from their increased access to paid employment through the exercise of basic worker rights; the adoption of policies addressing the needs of women, who were over-represented in the informal sector; the encouragement of firms to raise productivity by investing in workers rather than by cost-cutting; and the promotion of equal access to training and retraining for women and men. The General Assembly might wish to take those

recommendations into account and to focus on the issues of the improvement of the economic situation of rural women and the evolution of the international financial architecture and its repercussions for the full participation of women and the negative impact of financial crises on women.

7. **Mr. Hernández** (Coordinator, Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "An evaluation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)" (A/54/156-E/1999/102), said it showed that INSTRAW had achieved remarkable success in its specialized field of endeavour and was an example to the whole United Nations system of what could be accomplished with extremely limited resources. It was therefore regrettable that INSTRAW currently found itself in an acute financial crisis. If it were to close down, it would be the first case in the history of the United Nations of a United Nations body closing without being able to achieve its objective. Its closure would send very negative signals regarding the commitment of the United Nations to the advancement of women; INSTRAW's demise would slow the momentum towards gender equality which had been given impetus by the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

8. Every option must be explored to safeguard the future of an irreplaceable institution; JIU had made a number of practical and realistic recommendations to that effect in its report, and several of them could be implemented rapidly. Member States must acknowledge the high quality of INSTRAW programmes. Action must be taken to raise INSTRAW's visibility, strengthen the fund-raising function and increase the effectiveness of fund-raising activities, in which the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW must take a more active role at the regional level.

9. He noted with satisfaction that in accordance with recommendation 3 (a) of the JIU report, an experienced professional had been appointed as Acting Director of INSTRAW. It was to be hoped that the duties and responsibilities of the post of Director would be fully respected in conformity with INSTRAW's statutes.

10. JIU had become aware of a number of shortcomings in the administrative services provided to INSTRAW by the United Nations Secretariat, and considered that it was time to compensate the Institute for the inappropriate use of its funds, which resulted from donations by member States.

11. Under the Charter, one of the goals of the United Nations was the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, and to that end it was imperative to take into account the needs of all sectors of the population, including women. In that sense, there was a direct link between INSTRAW's training and research activities and the quest for universal progress.

12. In common with other United Nations institutions devoted to development which had no access to funding from the Organization's regular budget, INSTRAW was entirely financed by voluntary contributions, which placed it at a disadvantage compared with other bodies such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research that were able to receive subventions from the regular budget. Member States should take the necessary steps to remedy that injustice.

13. In conclusion, the JIU report had focused its attention on the future of INSTRAW by reviewing the Strategic Plan and Work Programme for 2000-2003, prepared at the request of the Economic and Social Council. That document represented a serious attempt to move INSTRAW forward to the next millennium, proposing institutional reforms to give it a more solid financial base.

14. **Ms. Ameer** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had called attention to the crucial issues that women faced and, in particular, to their all-inclusive role in society.

15. In the case of women in development, it was gratifying that the discussion focused not only on the biological differences between the sexes but also on the social implications of such differences. Accordingly, the concept of gender mainstreaming should be integrated into all development programmes so as to promote gender equality.

16. Over the recent years, the international economy had undergone a rapid transformation. The globalization and liberalization process which had marked the trend towards global economic integration had affected cultural, political and social norms. Although globalization had had positive effects in some countries, it had been prejudicial to women in developing countries. The Group of 77 and China had previously expressed their concern over the increase in world poverty and the greater inequality between regions and income groups that had resulted from that phenomenon. The accelerating feminization of poverty caused by the unpredictable nature of female employment in the global market should be underscored. The report entitled "1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work" (A/54/227) indicated that globalization had profoundly affected women's work; that growing numbers of women had been incorporated into paid employment but that their working conditions were usually inferior to those of men; that structural adjustment measures

had disproportionate costs for women, especially poor women; and that the welfare demands placed on the family and women had increased, especially in developing countries, owing to a reduction in social sector spending.

17. The internationalization of production, the reorganization of work and the mobility of labour in the globalized economy had had a significant impact that mainly affected women. The growing trend of multinational companies to transfer their production activities, generally to developing countries where labour in the informal sector was cheap, and the resulting exploitation of women, was particularly alarming. Much of the employment offered by such companies was unstable owing to the deregulation of the international market. Most of the workers in the informal sector were women and the majority did not have job security or social services. Women workers in both rural and urban areas suffered from poverty. The forces of globalization had increased poverty among women agricultural workers as a result of the liberalization of the market, which encouraged large-scale commercial farming.

18. It was clear that the economic insecurity resulting from globalization must be considered when the issues of gender mainstreaming and gender equity were examined. Several United Nations forums had been addressing the disproportionate effects of poverty on women. In that respect, the Group of 77 and China reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and recognized the efforts that the Division for the Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had made in that context. Nevertheless, they recommended a more thorough examination of issues relating to globalization and women's employment.

19. **Mr. Kääriäinen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Liechtenstein, which aligned themselves with his statement, welcomed the Secretary-General's report in document A/54/227, which would be of benefit to subsequent discussions on the issue and would assist the formulation of policy for the economic and social development of women. The report concluded that it was difficult to generalize regarding the positive or negative impact of globalization on gender equality. Globalization had provided new opportunities to empower women particularly through wage employment in new sectors. New technologies, for example, had the potential to provide women with access to the information they needed to improve their lives considerably.

20. However, a worrisome trend was that many negative impacts of liberalization and globalization appeared to have affected women disproportionately. For example, the flexibilization of employment had created precarious forms of employment that mainly concerned women. A growing number of women had paid employment but often under irregular and unfavourable conditions compared to the working conditions of men, and the principle of equal pay for work of equal value was not respected. Many countries had reduced social spending, which imposed an extra burden on the family and, in particular, on women. The Secretary-General's report indicated that, in general, a women's burden of household work and primary responsibility as care-givers for the family did not diminish with increased participation in paid employment.

21. It was a source of particular concern that the already large share of women among the world's poorest people would increase in coming years. Accordingly, measures should be taken at all levels to combat the feminization of poverty; a concerted effort to define effective measures to combat poverty was needed, particularly employment policies that encouraged gender equality. The attainment of such goals required the active and equal participation of men.

22. It had been increasingly recognized in recent years that gender equality was the essential precondition for eliminating world poverty and upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was now acknowledged that all social, political and economic structures and development policies should be designed so that women were not at a disadvantage. The European Union gave priority attention to mainstreaming women in development. That effort should be complemented by positive action designed to promote equal access of men and women to economic, political and social development opportunities. Attitudes and social norms needed to be changed, and the institutional and cultural barriers that hampered the participation of women in economic activity and decision-making at all levels must be eliminated. It was also necessary to ensure women's equal access to and control over economic resources, especially in regard to land ownership, credit, market access, employment and inheritance.

23. It was recognized that investments to promote the education of girls were extremely profitable. Two thirds of the illiterate worldwide were women. An educated and skilled workforce played a critical role in efforts to improve competitiveness, growth and employment in a globalizing

world. No country could afford to exclude a large part of its population from acquiring the requisite skills to take up those challenges. Governments should also increase their efforts to promote employment opportunities for qualified women and ensure equal pay for work of equal value and equal terms of employment with men.

24. There were also many gender-based inequalities in the field of health. The European Union therefore encouraged Governments to take steps to remedy that situation. It was essential to ensure, on a basis of equality between women and men, universal access to quality, affordable health care, and health services and information for women throughout their lives were essential.

25. Too often, macroeconomic policies were designed without sufficient attention to their impact on the lives of men and women. An effective development policy should take into consideration the complex interrelationship between growth, employment and productivity. The empowerment of women was also a prerequisite for poverty eradication and effective employment policies. Sex-disaggregated statistics were useful tools for developing economic and political strategies aimed at creating gainful employment opportunities and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for both women and men.

26. Microfinance services gave women access to financial services; they allowed the poor to become self-reliant, while creating employment opportunities and encouraging women to engage in economically productive activities. women should be equally represented in the decision-making process relating to funding and receive adequate information on the management of such operations.

27. Unpaid work was another important issue. The Secretary-General considered, rightly, that the matter should be given increased visibility and that the economic definition of work should be revised in order to include unpaid work. The agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women recommended developing mechanisms to measure unpaid work in quantitative terms in order to assess the real value of such work and accurately reflect it in official accounts.

28. The European Union considered that the United Nations system, especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), should continue to play a critical role in advancing the role of women in social and economic fields. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in particular, had mounted praiseworthy efforts helping the United Nations system strengthen gender expertise at the field level.

29. **Mr. Castillo** (Dominican Republic) emphasized that, in developing countries, it was women who suffered most from discrimination in the area of employment and at the decision-making level and women also who generally assumed responsibilities as heads of families. Nevertheless, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the only United Nations agency wholly devoted to research and training for the advancement of women, did not have access to resources from the Organization's regular budget. Depending on voluntary contributions, which prevented long-term or medium-term planning, the Institute was obliged to limit its activities to the very short term. It was unfortunate that the United Nations did not give greater attention to women in the developing world or stronger support to the Institute, as it played an essential role. INSTRAW could not continue to depend on voluntary contributions alone for its operations; it was urgent to assess its financial situation and simplify administrative procedures so that it could use the contributions it received when needed and execute its mandate.

30. During the General Assembly's general debate, the President of the Dominican Republic had reasserted that his country, the host country, attached great importance to INSTRAW, one of the three United Nations bodies located in a developing country and the only one in the Latin American and Caribbean region, and had appealed to all States to contribute to revitalizing the Institute so that it could continue its activities. Consequently, it was urgent that the United Nations should make a firm commitment to uphold the Institute, which was of significant importance for women in developing countries.

31. **Mr. Farar** (United States of America), referring to the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (A/54/227), said that it was a well-documented report that described in detail the barriers to women's advancement and the opportunities offered to them. Nevertheless, he hoped that future reports prepared by the Secretariat would reflect more of UNIFEM's experience and outlook. The report contained numerous practical observations that could assist those responsible for elaborating social and economic policies for the advancement of women. In most parts of the world, women continued to assume the primary responsibility for household tasks and childcare, despite their increasing presence in the workplace.

32. During its recent high-level segment, the Economic and Social Council had reaffirmed that the empowerment of

women, especially through employment, was crucial for the elimination of poverty and, indeed, for all aspects of economic development. Women accounted for the majority of new workers in both industrialized and developing countries. Women-owned businesses created employment in the United States.

33. With regard to women's role in the global economy, future reports should focus more on the opportunities that globalization provided for new approaches to the economic advancement of women. The World Survey mentioned that homeworking had increased in both industrialized and developing countries to the benefit of women more than men. That phenomenon affected a broad range of sophisticated and simple occupations and salary systems in service and manufacturing industries. Technological change would continue to influence the ways in which homeworking developed; therefore, future reports should examine the positive impact of technology on the world's people, including people in the developing world.

34. Investments in education and training for women and girls, and in health care and support services that enabled them to balance their professional and family responsibilities, benefited women and their families. Advancing the status of women was not merely a social and moral issue, it was also an economic imperative.

35. **Mr. Avramenko** (Russian Federation) said that his country was in favour of the full implementation of the commitments contained in the core documents of the Beijing Conference and the Summit for Social Development and the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-first session. It noted that a substantive discussion had been held during the high-level segment of the previous session of the Economic and Social Council, at the end of which a ministerial communiqué had been adopted on employment, the elimination of poverty and the improvement of the status of women.

36. In the four years following the Beijing Conference, the international community had taken various measures that had improved the status of women and strengthened their role in socio-economic development; but many problems remained to be solved.

37. With regard to the evaluation of the role of women in society, one should be careful of going to extremes. While recognizing the equality of men and women and the equal rights of the two sexes, the specific role that women played in society should also be borne in mind. Consequently, the State should recognize the extra burden that they must assume within the family and create conditions that allowed them to harmoniously combine employment and family obligations.

38. Russia still had many problems to resolve with regard to equal rights and opportunities for women. The existing legal system protecting women's rights by no means reflected current economic circumstances and was difficult to put into practice. Such problems, which many other countries also faced, needed to be solved together by using past experience, especially that of the corresponding agencies of the United Nations.

39. In Russia, women represented half the economically active population; their potential was a considerable economic resource. They should be helped to adapt to market conditions and their efforts must be channelled in the most effective direction. Russia relied on the constructive collaboration of the international community in order to accomplish that objective.

40. As the provisions of the documents of the United Nations had been reached by consensus, they were still current; that was particularly true of certain provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action that required the United Nations system and the international financial institutions to support countries in transition so that they might execute plans and programmes aimed at improving the status of women.

41. In Central and Eastern European countries, and in member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, projects and initiatives linked to matters of family planning and violence against women received support from United Nations funds and programmes. Although such problems were especially severe in countries in transition, it was also important, in those countries, to support the implementation of programmes designed to create jobs for women, to promote entrepreneurial spirit, to develop new independent activities that would allow women to work while carrying out their family responsibilities, to train women in management techniques, and to promote women to positions of responsibility in the political and economic arenas.

42. The competent United Nations bodies should devote more attention to questions related to the improvement of the socio-economic situation of women when they formulated technical assistance programmes for countries in transition. IMF and the World Bank should attach greater importance to gender parity in their projects.

43. **Ms. Garcia** (Mexico) said that globalization had transformed the labour market from the point of view of gender specificity. The integration of women into economic life had not ensured their equal treatment or eliminated

discrimination against them. Measures must therefore be taken to protect women in the labour market since increasing numbers of them were heads of households and often worked in the informal sector; not only did they hold jobs, but they also did household chores. Furthermore, they received salaries lower than those of men and were increasingly migrating in search of work.

44. At the national level, it was necessary to achieve a level of economic growth that would improve the situation of the most disadvantaged groups, especially women. Institutional mechanisms should be strengthened and social policies formulated with a view to augmenting the incomes of disadvantaged families and helping women to enter the labour market in equal and secure conditions by offering educational and training opportunities and by promoting employment.

45. Income disparities, imbalances in economic growth and market fluctuations at the international level hampered poverty reduction and the integration of women into development. International financial stability and access to world markets must be consolidated with a view to harmonizing structural and macroeconomic elements with human and social development priorities within the framework of a new concept of social productivity which would take into account the principle of equality between the sexes.

46. The Mexican Government, which accorded high priority to promoting the full participation of women in social, economic, political and cultural life on a par with men, devoted significant resources to programmes designed to eliminate poverty using a gender-specific perspective, and to training women in non-traditional activities; it was also encouraging independent employment and the creation of microbusinesses, in view of regional, social and gender realities.

47. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that sustainable development demanded the full participation of women in all aspects of the process; they should also be able to share on an equitable basis in the resulting benefits. Importantly, women must enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men. It was not enough to create projects for their benefit; the matter of equality must be integrated into all activities carried out within the framework of development cooperation.

48. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (E/1998/54) contained useful recommendations on capacity-building to improve the integration of women. Although impressive efforts had been made, much remained to be done to integrate the gender perspective into all activities. In that regard, those agencies that had not yet done so should adopt institutional directives. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework would be instrumental in integrating intersectoral themes, such as gender equality, into a strategic framework.

49. Furthermore, the Norwegian delegation agreed with the recommendation, in paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report that aimed to strengthen the capacity to implement commitments made at the Beijing Conference with regard to women's human rights, women's empowerment and the elimination of violence against them.

50. At the special session to be held in June 2000, the General Assembly should reaffirm but not renegotiate the Beijing Platform for Action. It should also assess progress achieved in the past five years, identify new approaches to action, and above all improve the Platform's implementation modalities.

51. The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (A/54/227) demonstrated that globalization had had ambiguous and sometimes contradictory effects on gender equality. Although women had gained new employment opportunities, they had also suffered more than men from economic volatility and job insecurity. Measures must clearly be taken at the national and international levels to minimize the negative effects of globalization on women, especially by giving them access to education and training, which should improve their income-earning opportunities, strengthen their cultural bonds and promote their participation in democratic processes. Furthermore, men and women should have the same rights to labour conditions, salary and access to credit. At the international level, the core labour standards should be universally implemented.

52. **Mr. Ma Xuesong** (China) said that women should participate in social and economic development and in the elimination of poverty. Since the Beijing Conference, the international community had worked energetically to eliminate obstacles to the advancement of women. However, instability in some parts of the world and financial crises in certain developing countries had contributed to the perpetuation and even exacerbation of poverty, of which women were the principal victims. The international community must adopt follow-up measures to fulfil the commitments already made and must create conditions conducive to women's full participation in development, especially by improving their access to education and jobs, extricating them from poverty and enhancing their status. The special session of the General Assembly on the question of women to be held in 2000 should provide the opportunity

comprehensively to review activities undertaken thus far and to formulate new programmes for action.

53. China had always upheld the principles of gender equality and women's participation in development. It had adopted a set of measures to assist them in various areas. In 1995, the Government had adopted a plan for the advancement of women, which fully incorporated the principle of gender equality in economic and social development plans and established 30 indicators designed to measure progress in such areas as education, employment and health. The situation of Chinese women had consequently improved: they were better informed and participated in public affairs and the job market in growing numbers.

54. China was aware that much remained to be done in the areas of economic and social development and participation of women; in that regard, it was ready to cooperate with other countries and relevant international organizations, particularly those in the United Nations system.

55. **Ms. Shambos** (Cyprus) commended the United Nations for its efforts to establish a gender perspective in all its activities. She welcomed in particular the report of the Secretary-General entitled "1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work" (A/54/227) and reaffirmed her country's support for the Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and its new strategic plan and work programme for 2000-2003.

56. After the dramatic events associated with the invasion of Cyprus 25 years previously, the Government had endeavoured to integrate women into the country's recovery efforts. Their contribution to the economic recovery and the development of Cyprus had been invaluable. Over the past 20 years, the role of Cypriot women in social and economic life had been considerably strengthened, principally through their increased participation in economic activity. Greater public awareness of gender issues had resulted in a study, at the political level, of the particular problems of women, their position in the workplace, their social status and their specific difficulties. In 1994, by decision of the Council of Ministers, the national machinery for the rights of women had been established following consultations with various interested organizations. The Council of Women's Rights, which was part of the national machinery, was an advisory body that submitted proposals on measures to promote equal representation, followed up the implementation of government measures and programmes on women's issues and provided the public with information on gender equality issues.

57. Recent government measures to enhance the role of women in development had been implemented through overall economic development policy aimed at maintaining full employment and through special measures to facilitate women's access to the labour market.

58. The main objectives of the strategic development plan for 1999-2003 were eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in the labour market, improving the support infrastructure for working parents and alleviating the particular problems faced by rural women by encouraging them to engage in income-generating activities.

59. Various legislative measures were also being drafted to cover a number of areas including equal treatment in the workplace, equal pay, social insurance benefits and the right to maternity leave. Those measures were constructive steps to entrench the notion of gender equality at all levels through gender mainstreaming in government development policy and plans of action. The Government of Cyprus was committed to pursuing all possible steps to ensure that women had full enjoyment of their basic human rights and were equal partners in shaping the economic, political and social life of the country. That commitment stemmed from the belief that achieving gender equality was a necessity dictated by the long-term requirements of the social and economic development of the country. However, much remained to be done to achieve gender equality in all societies. Both national and international efforts must be stepped up before there could be real partnership between men and women in the twenty-first century, with both sexes sharing the fruits of development within the family, in the workplace, in the political and economic spheres, in all sectors and at all levels.

60. **Mr. Myint** (Myanmar) stressed that in Myanmar, a country that had always attached great importance to gender equality, women and men enjoyed equal status in all aspects of life and action had been taken to follow up the recommendations contained in the Beijing Platform for Action. Thus, the National Committee for Women's Affairs, which had been set up in 1996, had formulated a national action plan for the advancement of women that had been implemented the following year. The action plan comprised six areas for intervention — women's education and training, women's health, women in the economy, women and culture, the girl child, and violence against women — and paid special attention to women living in remote rural border areas.

61. In 1991, the Government had established the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association to organize the maternal and child welfare activities that had been

undertaken by voluntary organizations for over 40 years. The Association was an autonomous humanitarian organization which worked with many United Nations bodies and national and international non-governmental organizations. The Association followed the national action plan for the advancement of women in its activities in the field of maternal and child health — including vaccination campaigns, nutrition programmes for children and combating HIV/AIDS — and female illiteracy. Its excellent primary health-care work had been recognized in an award from the World Health Organization (WHO).

62. **Mr. Lewy** (Israel) said that in terms of communal development, Israel stressed the human factor and, in particular, the role women must play in leadership capacity-building. Training programmes reflected a holistic approach to socio-economic development; that was why the Government's objective was to promote communities' self-sufficiency. Women must have equal access to education, vocational training and employment.

63. The international training centre at Mount Carmel had endeavoured since its inception 40 years previously to promote the gender issue on the international agenda. Over the years, it had contributed to the advancement of women in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Mediterranean region while continuing to stress the development of human resources by training women for sustainable development. To date, thousands of participants from numerous countries had attended courses, workshops and seminars at the Centre, and thousands of others had taken part in on-the-spot courses in cooperating countries. Those activities reflected Israel's strong commitment to the programmes of action recommended at the various international conferences of recent years. The Centre was cooperating with various international women's organizations, United Nations specialized agencies and other international development agencies.

64. Women would not enjoy equality with men unless responsibilities such as high-quality child care were shared by the community, unless the value of women's productive work and their incomes enabled them to meet their own and their families' needs and unless women held responsible posts at the local and national levels. Innovations must be introduced on a case-by-case basis, lessons must be drawn from experience and, if the evaluation was positive, policy makers must be persuaded to adopt the innovations.

65. However, at the macroeconomic level the economic crises of the 1990s in Africa, Latin America and Asia had largely eradicated whatever progress had been achieved during the previous two decades of development. Communities once again faced famine, disease and poverty, while Governments were less able to assist them. Non-governmental organizations must mobilize funds and intensify their efforts to mitigate the impact of those upheavals.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*